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SUBJECT: UNAMI SRSG TO DONOR PARTNERS: TOGETHER WE STAND OR FALL

REF: BAGHDAD 2298

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Summary: New UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert told a well-attended Iraq Partners Forum meeting on August 26 that it is "time to close the ICI chapter and open a new chapter" of the book on GoI-donor coordination. Melkert said his current thinking is to aim for an Ambassadorial-level, vice Ministerial-level, International Compact with Iraq (ICI) meeting in November. He added that this meeting should aim to segue the ICI into a new donor coordination mechanism. Melkert said he wants to focus on three issues: defining the true purpose of the ICI and how to maintain the political commitment to that purpose; reconciling and de-conflicting the myriad of plans, strategies and mechanisms for GOI planning and donor coordination; and determining how to plan for security for any international donor event, in light of the August 19 bombings in Baghdad. He described the various donor coordination mechanisms as "too many processes taking too much time from too many people." Noting the importance of dialogue and cooperation between the UN and donor countries, Melkert declared that "together, we stand or fall." End Summary.

High Interest in Donor Coordination at IPF Meeting

¶2. (U) The Iraq Partners Forum (IPF) is a monthly informal gathering of donor countries at UNAMI in Baghdad to discuss donor coordination and assistance priorities. Meetings are usually co-chaired by the UNAMI Deputy SRSG for the Office of Development and Humanitarian Support and the World Bank Country Manager, with attendance from the larger donors present in Baghdad and video-conference attendance by UNAMI staff and other donors based in Amman. UNAMI had considered not even holding an IPF this month, give the general August doldrums in Baghdad, but the advance agenda (with discussion of the ICI and the GOI's proposal for its new assistance coordination mechanism - Septel - on tap) made for a full room. Senior officials attended from the embassies or missions of the UK, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Australia, Denmark, the EC, the USG, and newcomers Greece and Korea, with Japan, Canada, and France participating via videoconference from Amman. The World Bank was notably absent, and the meeting was chaired by Acting UNAMI DSRSG Dr. Naeema Al-Gasseeer and new UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert sitting beside her.

Together We Stand Or Fall

¶3. (SBU) After a short introduction, Melkert said he wanted to make sure the international community keeps the social, political, humanitarian and economic agendas in Iraq closely linked and well informed. He noted the need for increased cooperation among UN agencies, both in

Baghdad and Amman, and with the larger donor community. Melkert's first impression, he added, is that there is a willingness by all of Iraq's partners to acknowledge that we are in the Iraqi effort together. Donor coordination is too often about process, he said, and needs to focus more on substance. Melkert specifically called for clearer direction from the GOI, and said he planned to discuss coordination efforts with the World Bank in Baghdad and Washington and with other UN agencies. Noting the importance of open, frank dialogue and cooperation between the UN and the donor countries in Baghdad, Melkert declared that "together, we stand or fall."

Closing the ICI Chapter...

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¶ 4. (SBU) Turning to the ICI, Melkert stated that his recent consultations with donors had been very helpful, specifically referencing his conversation with DCM for Assistance Transition Haslach (reftel). Melkert said he would continue his discussions with other donors, the GOI, and UNNY. His preliminary assessment is that it is "time to close the ICI chapter and open a new chapter" in the book of GOI-donor country coordination. Melkert added that while he would like to leave the door open to an Ambassadorial-level meeting sometime in the fall, a Ministerial-level meeting appears much less likely, especially after the August 19 bombings in Baghdad. In the short term, Melkert said he is focused on three issues: defining the true purpose of the ICI and how to maintain the political commitment to that purpose; reconciling and

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de-conflicting the myriad of plans, strategies and mechanisms for GOI planning and donor coordination; and determining how to plan for security for any event, Ambassadorial-level or otherwise, in light of the bombings.

...And Opening a New One

¶ 5. (SBU) Melkert went on to say that his current thinking is to merge the ICI into a yet-to-be-defined donor coordination mechanism that supports Iraq's National Development Plan (NDP), and noted that the UN is already aligning its agencies' strategies with this plan. Referring to the proliferation of donor coordination initiatives in Iraq (ICI, NDP, UNDAF, PRSP, IRFFI, etc.), Melkert said that there are "too many processes taking too much time from too many people," and that there is a need to condense and de-conflict these efforts into one comprehensive strategy. He said the international community should encourage the GOI to define priorities for assistance, and that the GOI needs to provide direction, now and after the election. Melkert concluded that he would like to take a few weeks to continue his consultations with the donors, the World Bank in Baghdad and Washington, the UN in NY, and the GOI before revisiting the future of the ICI and donor coordination.

¶ 6. (U) The other agenda item for the IPF meeting, a presentation by the Ministry of Planning DG for International Cooperation on her proposal for a new GoI assistance coordination mechanism, will be reported septel.

Comment

¶ 7. (SBU) Melkert's admonition to focus more on the substance of donor coordination rather than process is a welcome message and one that dovetails with the re-tooling of our assistance efforts under the new DCM for Assistance

Transition. Our consistent message to the UN and the rest of the donor community in Baghdad has been the need to focus on the end goals of efficient donor coordination and GOI leadership and direction on assistance rather than on any specific vehicle or process.

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